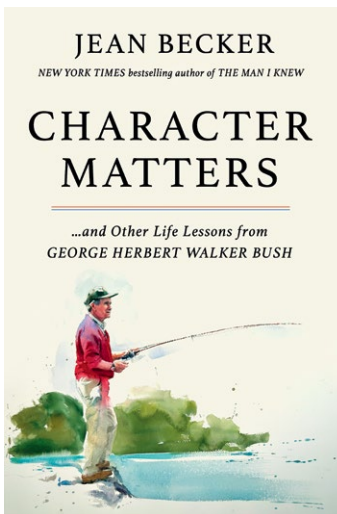


Deacons

Sichan Siv has been an active covenant partner, deacon and volunteer at First Presbyterian Church of San Antonio since 2015, a frequent contributor to First Press Magazine, and is committed to the mission and vision of FPC. He is also actively involved in FPC's Prison Ministry outreach, and a member of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. On November 30, 2023, he became the first to have visited all 100 units in the Department's 175-year history. We are blessed and grateful for his testimony and for sharing part of his inspiring life story here.

Character Matters



In celebration of the centennial of our 41st President, George H. W. Bush, the George and Barbara Bush Foundation is hosting a series of 41@100 Events at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, including the dedication of a new pavilion housing a Marine One Helicopter and the Locomotive 4141. "Character Matters" by Jean Becker (President Bush's Chief of Staff post White House until his death), is due for publication on April 16, 2024, and available for purchase. It is a collection of essays by some 150 people who have known the president well.

If you would like a bookplate signed by Jean Becker to accompany your book purchase, please send your name and address to Sichan at goldensiv@gmail.com. Jean would be happy to mail you one.

Our Deacon Sichan Siv, who was a Bush presidential assistant at The White House, is one of the contributors. He has participated in many programs at the Library since its opening in 1997. Recently, in October 2022 he re-dedicated the U.N. exhibit by placing a new "France" plaque, after planting a tree he named "George" in Navasota, Texas. In November 2023, he announced the publication of "Character Matters" honoring the 35th anniversary of Bush's election, at the Library in his address to the Boy Scouts' World Citizenship program that President Bush himself started at the Library.



Placing of the France plaque at the October 2022 re-dedication of the U.N. exhibit at the George Bush Presidential Library & Museum. Photo Courtesy of Siv Collection



"George" planted in Navasota, Texas in honor of Presidents George Washington, George H. W. Bush, and George W. Bush, and for God's glory. (Photo by Robert Holzweiss)

To honor the 100th anniversary of George H.W. Bush's birth, the George & Barbara Bush Foundation has launched the centennial commemoration, **41@100: A Celebration of George H.W. Bush**. The centennial will run from June 12, 2023, through December 31, 2024, and will culminate on what would've been President Bush's 100th birthday on June 12, 2024.



Exerpts from "Character Matters," Jean Becker, Editor

Sichan Siv, White House staff:

That I made it from the Killing Fields to The White House in thirteen years is a tribute to George Bush.

In the spring of 1975, while he was the U.S. envoy to China, I was working in dangerous situations in Cambodia, trying to save thousands of people fleeing the war-torn countryside. The United States, aware of Communist reprisals, told me when the time came, I would have only one hour to report to the embassy to be airlifted out of Phnom Penh. It was April 12, 1975. Despite the flawless evacuation by the Ford Administration (not one life was lost), I missed the helicopter by 30 minutes. I was meeting a provincial governor trying to feed some 3,000 stranded families.

Top & bottom right: CIA Director Bush, photos courtesy of the George Bush Presidential Library

Bottom left photo: Killing fields survivor, photo courtesy of the Siv Collection



Continued...

Five days later, the Communist Khmer Rouge turned the country into a land of blood and tears, killing everyone who had not been with them in their so-called revolution. My mother gave me her wedding ring, a scarf, and a bag of rice and told me to run. "No matter what happens, never give up hope," she said.

I rode a bicycle for three weeks across Cambodia but was captured near the Thailand border. Put in forced labor camps, I worked eighteen hours a day on a bowl of rice. I wondered if I would survive, but I prayed daily that I would see freedom.

On February 13, 1976, thirteen days after George Bush became CIA Director, I jumped off a truck and ran, walked, crawled for three days having nothing to drink or eat; nothing to guide me except the sun, the stars, and the moon. I was severely wounded in a booby trap, but managed to limp to Thailand where I was jailed.

After teaching English to fellow refugees, I managed to immigrate to America, arriving in Connecticut with my mother's scarf, an empty rice bag, and two dollars. I picked apples there, then in 1977 went to New York to drive a taxi.

I later learned that my mother, sister, brother, and their children – fifteen family members altogether -- were killed by the Communists.

In 1981, George Bush became vice president, and I graduated from Columbia University. On July 13, 1988, as a dais guest of President Reagan in the Rose Garden, I met George Bush for the first time. The thought never crossed my mind that a few months later I would work for him, and he would become the most influential person in my life.

On February 13, 1989, exactly thirteen years from the day I jumped off that truck in the Cambodian jungle, I started working for the 41st president of the



Stamps: Courtesy of the Siv Collection

Top photo: "Blessed Together - The World War II Veteran and Genocide Survivor were also UN Ambassadors and White House Colleagues."

Bottom photo taken in Birmingham AL in 2005 reflects the likeness of President Bush in U.S. postage stamps. 41 and Sichan Siv standing with Alabama flag: photo courtesy of the Business Council of Alabama



"Thanks for your life, love, and leadership. Until we meet again, I am blessed you are beside me." - Sichan Siv

United States. While my mother gave me life and my wife Martha gave me love, 41 taught me about leadership and how to be a complete person.

I learned mainly from watching him. For example, I was impressed how he managed to keep communications open with Beijing after the Tiananmen Square massacre on June 4, 1989; yet he received the Dalai Lama at the White House.

He quickly digested the eighty-two page report on Iraqi atrocities in occupied Kuwait I sent him on December 14, 1990, and did not stop talking about it.

He was among the first to congratulate me after his son George W. Bush asked me to represent America at the United

Nations. He started calling me Mr. Ambassador.

In October 2018, Jean Becker informed David Bates, Shirley Green, Fred McClure, Chase Untermeyer, and myself that when President Bush died, we would accompany "41" on Air Force One for his last earthly journey to Washington.

The flight with President George W. Bush, Secretary James Baker, and of course "41," was quite emotional. I realized I was the only person not born in the United States.

He once wrote to me:

When we think of you, we think about an outstanding leader and public servant; we think about honor, decency, and integrity; we think about service to others.

I would say back to him: "Thanks for your life, love, and leadership. Until we meet again, I am blessed you are beside me. Whether or not each other we can see, I always feel your spirituality. In serving God and Country, I give thanks in my prayers for thee."

Sichan escaped from Cambodia's Killing Fields in 1976 after missing the US evacuation helicopters the year before. He served as a deputy assistant to President Bush at the White House and as an ambassador to the United Nations under President George W. Bush. The author of several books, Sichan lives in San Antonio and was married to Martha Pattillo Siv from Pampa, Texas, for thirty-three years until her liftoff to heaven in 2016.

Excerpts reprinted by permission, Jean Becker, Twelve Press.



Once we were four with a Christmas tree,
Then we were three by a shining sea,
Now I'm alone, but not lonely;
For God is with us, with you and me,
Soon we will be again together,
This time, it will be forever,
Together, forever through eternity

"Love never ends" 1 Corinthians 13:8

"Once we were four": "The emotional flight on Air Force One on December 3, 2018 inspired Deacon Siv to pen this poem." (Artwork by NASA Engineer Ted Ricker!) Top left photo courtesy of the George Bush Presidential Library, bottom left photo taken by Doro Bush Koch, right photo taken by William Canary.